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ABSTRACT

Following inquiry into small elementary school evaluation processes, a system of evaluation was developed which proposes to standardize and make more efficient already existing forms of evaluation, improve communication among school staff on matters of education and evaluation, and insure that all critical matters of schooling are openly reviewed on a continuing basis. A discussion on the status of continuing and systematic evaluation by small school districts (there is very little such evaluation) is followed by a list of reasons why evaluation doesn't take place. Six reasons are cited for the need to incorporate systematic evaluation efforts into educational routine. Eight areas in which partial evaluation usually takes place are identified and discussed in relation to a systematic process. The eight elements to be included in a continuing system of evaluation in a small school district include: the teachers; a communications system; the principal; outside reviews; established goals, tasks, and agenda; a continuous but manageable evaluation pattern; equitable task distribution; and setting a 5-year plan which allows continuity in spite of staff turnover. Six steps are suggested for incorporating these elements. Twenty-four references, an appendix on how evaluation committees might work, and a flow chart conclude the document. (BRR)

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A STRATEGY FOR EVALUATION IN THE SMALL RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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A STRATEGY FOR EVALUATION IN THE SMALL RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL[1]

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Why don't we typically find an elementary school in a small rural [redacted] school district in the United States engaging in continuing and systematic school evaluation? Why would a formal system of evaluation be needed in such a school? What forms of evaluation can be found there already? How might a formal program of school evaluation be organized so that it could be easily integrated into the realities of life in the small school district?

These questions were the focus of recent inquiry into evaluation in the small rural elementary school. It was undertaken because previous studies had reported little or no use of systematic and continuing forms of evaluation in such schools, because there is little knowledge about evaluation in small rural school districts contained in the published literature, and because there are few guidelines or models that are grounded on observations of the natural work of a school for establishing programs of evaluation in small school districts.

This inquiry was preceded by a year of informal conversations with school staff, followed by a week of observation and individual interviews with all thirteen teachers, the elementary school principal, and the school superintendent in a small rural school

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[1] This paper was prepared while the author was in residence at the Educational Research Centre, St. Patrick's College, Dublin, Ireland. The research was supported in part by a faculty research grant from Western Michigan University.

district in Michigan. Transcripts of the interviews and field notes from the previous year were used to identify patterns and themes that are reported as (1) functions to be served by evaluation in a small school district and (2) elements to be included in a continuing program of evaluation in a small school district.

The findings of this study are followed by the development of a strategy for organizing a program of evaluation in the small school district. This proposed strategy remains to be tested. It is grounded on observations of natural school life and, to the extent that the right pieces of a program of evaluation have been identified, it should fit the need for more systematic and continuing evaluation of elementary schools in small school districts, accomplishing the goal for which it is intended - improvement of schools.

There are a few terms that are used in this report that warrant clarification. When the term evaluating is used, it is referring to a systematic and formal process of making value judgments. The process involves studying the entity to be evaluated (e.g., teaching, textbook, student development) and then using explicit criteria to arrive at a judgment of merit or worth. The term brainstorming, refers to a group process of creating solutions to problems, proposing answers to questions, or resolving issues when a satisfactory solution, answer, or resolution is not evident. Such sessions are generally informal, open to all ideas (without fear of criticism), and divergent in the range of possible responses given by participants. The term stocktaking refers to a

group process of reflecting back over a school year, or thinking ahead for a schol year, in order to identify major topics that need to be discussed by a school staff. Finally, the term stakeholder is used to refer to the people involved in a program or activity who have a vested interest in its well-being.

The Status of Continuing and Systematic Evaluations of Schools in Small School Districts

Our public school system in the United States is decentralized, with the school district, which serves an entire community, as the basic organizational unit. There are over 16,000 public school districts in the U.S. A small school district may be defined as one that serves fewer than 5,000 students, grades kindergarten through twelve. Approximately 89% of American school districts fall in this category. In fact, over 54% of U.S. school districts serve fewer than 1,000 students.[2]

Research in the United States (Lyon, et al., 1978; Kennedy, Apling and Neumann, 1980) has indicated that formal and continuing systems of school evaluation, apart from regular visits by external teams required for accreditation every seven years and apart from school testing programs, are virtually non-existent in small school districts. A few exceptions exist, but they are a very small minority. Systematic reviews of small school districts, conducted either by internal staff members or by external consultants, rarely occur as a regular part of school planning, program improvement, or public reporting.

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[2] These figures on enrollment size of U.S. school districts are taken from the 1980 Digest of Education Statistics, published by the U.S. National Center for Educational Statistics.

Testing programs appear to be the closest small school districts come to a continuing and systematic form of school evaluation, and testing typically focuses on only one aspect of the total school picture - that of student achievement.[3] Moreover, it is unclear how, or whether, testing data affect decisions related to planning, program improvement, or public accountability in small school districts (Kennedy, Apling, and Neumann, 1980; Kellaghan, Madaus, and Airasian, 1982).

A Rationale for Continuously Evaluating Schools in Small School Districts

Given that systematic programs of school evaluation are seldom seen in small school districts, one might wisely ask why this is the case. Likewise, one might ask why a small school district would even want to invest in a program of school evaluation. Both are certainly legitimate questions and together they can help to form a rationale for school evaluation.

The major reasons given in the literature for the low incidence of evaluation systems in small school districts have been:

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[3] Lists of criteria for school evaluation may be found in the Evaluative Criteria Manuals used for accreditation studies (e.g., NSSSE, 1973). Other lists of criteria abound in the literature. For example, the publication, Your School: How Well is it Working?, published by the National Committee for Citizens in Education, Columbia, Maryland, lists over 100 references to books, articles, agencies, surveys, consultants, and studies that may be used to identify characteristics of good schools. Frameworks for program evaluation, such as those published by Cronbach (1963), Hammond (1967), Stake (1967), and Stufflebeam (1971) also provide guides for systematic school evaluation.

1. Teachers and principals in small school districts are untrained and inexperienced in systematic school evaluation methods (Kennedy, Apling and Neumann, 1979).

2. The costs of adding still another line item into an already overburdened school budget is prohibitive (Scriven, 1974).

3. Teachers and principals are called upon infrequently to justify their decisions (Lortie, 1975). There is little need to account for individual decisions (Kennedy, Apling, and Neumann, 1979).

4. Teachers and principals are often correct when they make decisions based purely on professional experience and hence do not feel a need for more systematic study. Only a collection of misguided decisions will provoke criticism (Kennedy, Apling and Neumann, 1979).[4]

5. Support for systematic evaluation by people with clout in the school is missing, and systematic evaluation is seen to be a threat by school staff (King and Pechman, 1982).

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[4] Kennedy, Apling, and Neumann (1979) go on to say that at the building level, clinical issues seem to prevail and professional knowledge appears to be preferred over systematic information. "Teaching occurs from moment to moment, and teachers rely on their professional knowledge of each moment to determine the next moment's activities. Thus the nature of their job reinforces their habit of relying on professional knowledge." (p. 128) Paul (1977) also concluded that "... teachers work best with and rely most on fellow teachers in information sharing and collaboration for change ... fellow teachers have more credibility and are able to elicit greater trust and reduce discomfort." (p.40)

Reasons why educators need to incorporate systematic evaluation efforts into their routines have been given as:

1. The need to improve schools and to plan for school improvement, guided by a process of (1) identifying needs, (2) selecting the best strategies among known alternatives, (3) monitoring changes as they occur, and (4) measuring the impact of these changes. Only by this process can educators minimize the chance of making misdirected or inconsequential changes and justify expenditures associated with school changes (Stufflebeam, et al, 1971). Hammond (1967) elaborated on this logical argument by stressing the use of systematic evaluation to avoid faddism, changes due entirely to political pressures, pendulum-swinging, reliance on persuasive claims of advocates and salesmen, and lack of shared information (i.e., to avoid lack of awareness by staff and the public of what is happening in the school). Alkin, Daillak, and White (1979) documented the use of evaluation to direct decision-making about a new program.

2. The need to engage in cost-benefit analyses of programs and practices that require the expenditure of large amounts of money (Madaus, Airasian, and Kellaghan, 1980). A push for accountability in public education (Lessinger and Tyler, 1971; Browder, et al, 1973; Webster, 1977) is consistent with this line of reasoning.

3. The need to test a number of popular theories (myths?) about the process of education and its effects on student

development that pervade the practice of education. Although professional experience dictates much of the practice of teaching and school management, this basis for making educational decisions is vulnerable to calls for justification of these decisions. As Cronbach, et al. (1980) noted, "The need for systematic and often subtle information to supplement or confirm casual observations is what generates the call for evaluation." (p. 38)

4. A professional need for educators to know the quality of their school programs and constantly to seek ways for improving quality (Spencer, 1964; Cronbach, 1980).

5. The need to reduce uncertainty when experience is limited or missing (Patton, et al, 1978; Kennedy, Apling, and Neumann, 1979).

6. The need to satisfy some external agency's demand for a report, to legitimate decisions, or to engage in some form of public relations (King, Thompson, and Pechman, 1982).

Thus, there are several good reasons for and against creating a formal system of school evaluation. There is also little evidence of formal evaluation systems operating in small school districts in the United States.

However, the observations and interviews that were done as part of this study led to several conclusions about the need for a formal system of school evaluation. The rationale underlying this need may be summarized as follows:

Even though there is no discernable system of evaluation, evaluation does exist in the school in many forms. The following phenomena were reported or observed in the elementary school: (1) teachers working alone on complex problems associated with teaching and classroom management, (2) teachers making curriculum decisions and selecting curriculum materials, (3) testing results being provided to teachers and school administrators, (4) ideas for new programs or program changes being discussed by the principal and teachers, (5) teachers accumulating a wealth of qualitative information about individual students, (6) decisions being made each year regarding teacher inservice education and goals for the school for the coming year, (7) individual teachers discovering new techniques and trying them in their own classroom, and (8) "curriculum drift" over several years that resulted in changes in program priorities. These occurrences are a natural part of school life. They occur regularly and are familiar to both teachers and principal. Yet, the evaluations involved are disconnected, follow no set procedure or plan, and are done without coordination or full knowledge by anyone in the school. For purposes of better communications and cooperation among staff, efficiency (i.e., redundant work is avoided), and comprehensiveness (i.e., some important evaluation task is not overlooked), organizing for evaluation appears to be justified. Because the evaluation that would be accomplished within a formal system is evaluation that would naturally occur without it, the arguments that staff are untrained to do it, that it is too costly, that it doesn't have to be done, and that it is unsupported and threatening are moot. The benefits of better communications and cooperation, efficiency, and comprehensiveness can be achieved at little or no additional cost.

Functions to Be Served by a Formal System of Evaluation in a Small School District

There is no reason to believe that these observations and interviews with teachers and school administrators in one elementary school are not generalizable. Each of the forms of evaluation that have been listed are likely to be found in any public elementary school. On the following pages the natural evaluative functions that were observed in the school will be

described, and methods in which each could be improved through the use of more systematic evaluation methods will be discussed.

The following are evaluative functions that were identified in the school:

1. Teachers work alone, in isolation, on problems of instruction and classroom management. A student does not respond to disciplinary measures or an obviously bright child is having emotional problems that interfere with school performance Rather than sharing these problems with other teachers or the principal, the teacher feels responsible for solving these problems (and has no solutions). The teacher is frustrated and students suffer as a result. An evaluation system could provide a mechanism for both problem sharing and cooperative problem solving on common and unique classroom issues. These are the classroom clinical issues identified in the Kennedy, Apling, and Neumann (1979) study.

2. Systematic curriculum and curriculum materials reviews are frequently conducted by teachers, especially in reading and mathematics. Each time a review is undertaken, procedures and criteria have to be devised, or recalled. This evaluation activity (curriculum and curriculum materials reviews) could be guided by a standardized process and by checklists that are developed and approved by teachers. It could also establish a system for pilot testing new curriculum materials before the decision to adopt them is made. This effort could eliminate the need to develop individual procedures and criteria each

time parts of the curriculum or sets of materials are being reviewed. It could also contribute to the objectivity of the review, shortcircuiting persuasive pitches by advocates or salesmen, and to the justification of a decision (should anyone ask).

3. Standardized tests are given at certain grade levels each year, but testing results are not used in any systematic way. Some teachers look at the summary report to see if their perceptions of individual students are consistent with the test scores. Some teachers report no interest in the results, claiming that the test reports are really for the principal and other administrators. Administrators do not use the test reports for curriculum review. These observations are consistent with the conclusions reported by Kellaghan, Madaus, and Airasian (1982).

   An evaluation system could be used to tie testing results to program and individual student decisions. For example, if grade level and subject matter goals have not been tied to the tests yet, they could be, and a process of program review (e.g., for the reading program) could follow. Lack of testing or other information on student progress in certain goal areas for the school could also lead to changes being made in the testing program.

4. Several good ideas for new programs or curriculum changes in the school stopped at the talking stage for lack of a practical process for change or a system for moving the ideas

along to the next stage (e.g., prototype development, pilot tryouts, formal evaluations). An evaluation system could include an easy mechanism for proposing new ideas, getting them discussed and tried, and, if workable, getting them incorporated into school or grade level programs. Ideas that were discussed included a children's literature program, a project oriented science program, outdoor education, computer education, an early identification program for students with predictable academic or discipline problems, accelerated work for gifted and talented students, and early career/vocational education.

5. Each teacher accumulates a wealth of information about each student in a year and only a small part of that information is transmitted to other teachers, across grade levels. A formal system of evaluation could set up a process for communicating more essential knowledge about students as they progress through the grades than is currently done with report cards and student folders.

6. Priorities for the school year, and decisions about inservice programs for teachers are dispatched, seemingly arbitrarily, by the principal. Sometimes these decisions are made in consultation with some teachers, but often they are not. An evaluation system could provide for staff stocktaking and a brainstorming session at the beginning and end of each school year to identify strengths and problem areas on which a plan for the year (including inservice programs) could be built.

7. Although individual teachers are discovering and becoming excited by new professional ideas, there is little sharing of such information. Teachers who are trying new materials or methods do not share information with other teachers or outsiders. An evaluation system could serve a brokerage role for findings of research studies, new ideas found in publications or gained from discussions with other educators, and new developments found in courses, conferences, and workshops. It could also allow for demonstration projects to occur within the school so that teachers who are trying out new materials or methods could share their experiences.

8. The curriculum of the school changed over the years without formal discussions by the staff. Programs in geography, history, and laboratory science gradually disappeared from the curriculum. A formal system of evaluation could serve to avoid what one teacher called "curriculum drift". Programs in each subject area could be monitored so that gradual changes in curriculum occur knowingly and with justification.

Elements to Be Included in a Continuing System of Evaluation in a Small School District

In addition to the functions that may be served by a formal system of evaluation, the observations and interviews led to certain conclusions about elements that need to be present if systematic school evaluation is to be promoted. Some of these elements have already been foreshadowed by the above list of functions. These are interpretations of a great amount of information that was available from the interviews and observations of school life.

Elements of a systematic program of evaluation that are seen as essential include the following:

1. Teachers must be involved in planning and implementing the evaluation system. The entire school staff should understand the evaluation system and the origins of its design. The system should be guided by a spirit of cooperation, with a goal of improving the school as a whole.

   Each school building in a small district should have its own system of school evaluation. The system should not be dependent on one or two people for it to continue; it should be one that operates independently, without regard to who is on the staff each year. There also needs to be a feeling of ownership in the system by all members of the staff.

2. The evaluation system should put a premium on communication so that (at least) monthly memos, updates, and schedules for school evaluation activities are circulated to all members of the school faculty and administration. One aim of these communications should be to develop an evaluation spirit and common understanding about evaluation among teachers, administrators, the school board, and the community served by the school.

3. The principal is probably in the best position to initiate and coordinate all the elements of the evaluation system. The position of principal requires a building - wide perspective of the school rather than concentration of attention at a

single grade level or on one content area. The duties of school principals require in part that the incumbent be responsible for, and have the authority to make, decisions that affect the entire school, such as determining assignments given to staff and supervising progress on those assignments.

4. Outside reviews of evaluation activities should be built into the system to control for bias, to enhance credibility, to avoid conflicts of interest, and to add an outside perspective on matters of evaluation. Strategies to accomplish this outside review could include short-term teacher or administrator exchanges with another school, or use of an evaluation review board (composed of teachers, administrators, community members, students, college faculty members who are willing to volunteer their services, or other interested and qualified individuals).

5. Evaluation goals and tasks should be targeted each year so that a clear and workable agenda may be followed. Further, the evaluation system should put a premium on follow-up of all plans so that all stakeholders are kept informed about the outcomes of evaluation activities. Follow-up could be a primary goal of the communication function discussed earlier.

6. Evaluation should be continuous, with a manageable amount of evaluation work done each year (versus a "big change--nothing--big change--nothing ..." pattern of evaluation and change).

7. Evaluation activities should not be overly burdensome with time and paper work requirements. Released time for teachers should be considered when evaluation tasks begin to pile up. By distributing the load, by taking advantage of outside volunteer services, and by incorporating evaluation tasks into routine work (e.g., textbook reviews, inservice workshops, teachers' meetings, the testing program), a lot of evaluation could be accomplished each year with little or no added demands on staff time.

8. A five year plan of evaluation for the school, updated each year, with a schedule of tasks to get done, could enable the evaluation system to operate independently when there are personnel changes. It would also set expectations of staff for evaluation (i.e., help build the "evaluation spirit") and aid teachers to plan their time in such a way that allows for evaluation tasks to be completed.

A Strategy for Systematic School Evaluation

There are a lot of pieces to the puzzle that have come out of these talks with teachers and school administrators. These pieces, put together in the right configuration, can result in an evaluation system that benefits the school (i.e., will be used for school improvement) and that is workable.

The following organizational strategy is one that is grounded in the information gained during time spent with teachers and school administrators, and may serve as a frame of reference for developing a program of evaluation for a school. It needs to be

tested in schools, and then revised or reconceptualized once more is learned about how to integrate systematic evaluation into school life.

This framework should be close to the way a formal program of evaluation can be organized because of the way in which it was developed. That is, observation of the natural work of a school served as the groundwork for identifying appropriate functions and elements for the program. This framework is simply a conceptual organization of the information gained from observation of school life. As such, it is not ungrounded, not just another example of academic theorizing, deduced from *a priori* assumptions. It should last, but probably in a modified or reformulated way, because it is intimately linked to data collected on the way the elementary school functions in a small school district. To the extent that the right pieces of an evaluation program have been identified, the framework should fit the need for more systematic evaluation, and it should accomplish the goal for which it is intended - improvement of schools.

One way in which the pieces to this plan may be organized is provided in Figure 1. Although the process is straightforward and seemingly simple, there are a few things that require explanation.

First, the principal's task of compiling an annotated list of normal evaluation activities within the school should include a schedule for [illegible] curriculum subjects to be reviewed. For example, the reading program in the school might be scheduled for review every second or third year. Moreover, the principal will

probably not be aware of all evaluation work being done in the school and will need to talk to teachers in order to discover individual projects or evaluations that they are doing or feel need attention.

Second, a specialist in educational evaluation should be involved in planning the first few stocktaking sessions held in the school. This consultant could provide assistance in identifying areas of the school where evaluation could contribute to school quality and where no evaluation plans currently exist, in identifying procedures, instruments, and checklists to facilitate evaluation tasks, and in scheduling work for the different evaluation committees so that their assignments are manageable and so that critical tasks can be completed on time using sound procedures. Eventually, committee work in the school should become familiar enough for the principal and teachers to take over completely.

Third, the principal should monitor the work of all committees to see that evaluation work is continuing on schedule and to arrange for extra assistance (e.g., clerical help or released time) if a committee requires it.

Fourth, the committee should be set up and assigned tasks in as natural a form as possible for the school. That is, a committee reviewing the reading program should include teachers from all levels of the school and a reading specialist, if one exists. The amount of committee work should not exceed that which would ordinarily occur in the school in the absence of a formal system of

evaluation. However, the procedures may be different and be more standardized than before.

Fifth, any recommendations for changes in the school following a systematic evaluation will need to follow protocol and policies for the school and school district. That is, some changes may require approvals beyond the decisions of the committee, the school faculty, and the principal.

Sixth, the details of the work of each committee - the questions they should address, the data they need to collect, the criteria they should be using, timelines for data collection, plans for data analysis and arriving at recommendations - are missing from this organizational framework. The specific problems that may be addressed in one school were described earlier in this paper. Then, there was a move up one level of abstraction, to suggest a process that may be used to attack these problems. Teachers and principals in the school will need to move back down the ladder of abstraction to identify the particular evaluation functions that are important for their school. This is where an evaluation system becomes situational and specific, defying attempts to develop a generalizable framework. At best, a process for conducting evaluations systematically can be suggested, but the specific evaluation activities to be undertaken must be based on the realities of the individual school. As Cronbach, et al. (1980) noted, "The evidence to be sought in each instance is that which will produce the greatest difference in ... thought and action." (pp.13-14)

Summary

This has been a report of findings of naturally occurring evaluation activities in one school and the elements of an evaluation system that would have to be present if the disconnected and often unsystematic evaluation activities that occur during the school year are to be made more systematic. This report contains a rationale for developing a more systematic approach to school evaluation. The organizational strategy that was proposed for restructuring school evaluation activity addresses most of the reasons given for not having evaluation systems in small school districts, while contributing several predictable benefits. This strategy needs to be tested in a number of small districts, and then based on the result modified or reformulated into a conceptual framework that may be applied generally. As such, this is a report of research and substantive theory building in progress.

In essence, this system for evaluation is aimed at standardizing and making more efficient already existing forms of evaluation in elementary schools, at improving communications among school staff on matters of education and evaluation, and at insuring that all of the critical matters of schooling are being openly reviewed on a continuing basis. Small rural elementary schools are dynamic organizations and changes in them can be informed, justified, and have high potential for improving the quality of education by undertaking more systematic evaluation.

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APPENDIX A

How the Committees Might Work

There are several committees which could be established to address the evaluation functions already discussed. Fortunately, there is a useful body of resource literature and previous experience from which to draw for each of the evaluation committees that could be formed. The following is a brief discussion of the way the committees might function. Any or all of these committees could comprise the evaluation program during one school year. That is, one would not have to undertake the full range of possible evaluation functions concurrently.

1. The committee on problem sharing and cooperative problem solving - a member of this group could meet individually with each teacher and the principal to solicit particularly difficult issues with which they are faced. Issue identification could be confidential.

   A weekly staff meeting, perhaps over lunch, before school, after school, or even at someone's home, could focus on one issue at a time. A particularly difficult issue could even be discussed over several weeks.

   Literature on solutions for particular teaching, classroom, or organizational problems could be collected from a local college, or perhaps from personal libraries. The school may even allocate some funds toward building a professional library of its own on teaching, school studies,

and human behavior. Books such as those prepared by Brubaker (1970), Cantor (1953), Good and Brophy (1973), McClosky (1971), Rosenshine (1971), and Tanruther (1973) have particularly good treatments of common teaching issues.

Presentations at committee meetings could rotate among members, each dealing with a particular topic. When a workable solution to a problem is discovered, it might be summarized in a memo by the principal and communicated to all school staff.

In addition, new and interesting solutions might be tested in the school with observed outcomes reported to the committee. Permanent changes in the school could also be proposed to the entire staff and be the subject of discussion at a teachers' meeting.

2. The committee on curriculum and curriculum review - members of this group could set up a five year plan for the review of subjects covered in the school curriculum. For instance, the reading program across all grades in the school could be scheduled for review in years 1, 3, and 5; mathematics in years 2 and 4; arts in years 2 and 4; etc. This plan could also be used to shortcircuit the "curriculum drift" problem mentioned in the paper.

The committee could also develop a list of questions that are to be answered during each review by soliciting commonly asked questions from each teacher in the school and from the principal.

Literature on the review of curriculum subjects and of curriculum materials is especially abundant, and the committee could collect the most useful resources for the school library. Of particular value would be such resources as NSSSE Evaluation Criteria (1973), Morrisett and Stevens (1967), Tyler and Klein (1967), and Eash (1970).

The committee could set a schedule for itself to answer questions about a program and its materials through thorough reviews, data collection, and talks with other teachers and the principal. A report of findings and recommendations could end the committee's work for the year.

Eventually, resources and procedures used for reviews will become standardized and familiar to all teachers, so that the work of the committee could level off after a few years.

3. The committee on testing - a member of this committee could talk to each teacher and the principal in the school about how they use standardized test reports and what changes they could use in the testing program. A compilation of uses and suggested changes could be shared among all teachers and the principals and then used as a basis for discussion about the value of the testing program.

Other members of the committee could work on listing instructional objectives by grade level and subject matter and then cross-referencing objectives covered by currently used

standardized tests. This work could result in a discussion of the coverage by the standardized tests of the school's curriculum and a discussion of changes that might be justified as a result of the analysis.

Still other members of the committee could use the previous year's standardized test report to identify weaknesses in the curriculum or needs of individual students which may require curriculum, teaching, or counseling changes. Inservice workshop topics may also result from this analysis.

The result of this work could be summarized in a memo to all teachers by the principal and used for discussions of changes to be made in the school. The results of this committee's work would also be useful to the committee on curriculum and curriculum review.

Resources that would be useful to this committee include those prepared by Cronbach (1963), Cox and Sterrett (1970), and Jaeger (1970).

4. The committee for new programs or curriculum changes - members of this committee might organize a weekly forum for discussion of new ideas for the school. Any topic should be encouraged.

A member of the committee could meet with each teacher to compile a list of possible new and interesting additions to the school's education program that would serve as an agenda of topics for the coming year. The committee could then

schedule topical discussions for the school staff, led by an advocate for the topic who would explain the concept, rationale, and details of the idea, followed by a discussion of strengths and weaknesses, constraints, and benefits that could result from the proposed change. A summary list of topics covered during the year could be reviewed at the end of the year for potential development during the upcoming year or two. This committee could also arrange for tryouts and evaluations of changes suggested through this forum.

How do you evaluate an idea? Discussions might address the following questions:

- who would benefit?
- potential for successful educational outcomes?
- resource requirements?
- consistency of the idea with the school's mission and the community it serves (e.g., need)?
- overlap with already existing offerings?
- results when it has been tried elsewhere (from the professional literature)?
- implications for organizational changes?
- trade-offs (i.e., what would have to be dropped to accommodate it)?
- competition for change (i.e., are there other, higher priority changes)?

5. <u>The committee on transmitting student information</u> - members of this group could speak to all other teachers about whether

there is information that they have on individual students that is not reported on standardized testing forms or other student records. They could also inquire about whether teachers would welcome more information when they receive new students. Possible candidates for additional information could be related to specific deficiencies that an individual student has that a future teacher should know about and work on. Other possibly pertinent information could include certain home circumstances, personal history, health or physical problems, or emotional problems that could contribute to a better understanding of a student's development. By compiling a list of qualitative information which teachers believe would be useful, but which is not transmitted typically, the committee could develop a form or format for teachers to communicate this information to other teachers. This committee could also arrange for a teacher conference at the end or beginning of a school year wherein appropriate dyads of teachers review student rosters.

Resources that could help teachers review student needs have been prepared by the Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University (1981).

6. <u>The committee for organizing beginning-of-year and end-of-year stocktaking sessions</u> - members of this group could arrange for a site and time for all teachers and the principal to spend a half or full day of uninterrupted discussion. They could talk to other teachers and the principal to compile topics for the meeting and then set the agenda. The article by Spencer

(1964) reflects the excitement, colleagiality, and professionalism that can be generated through these conferences.

7. The committee for information sharing - members of this group could talk to other teachers, perhaps monthly, to ask them for new ideas that they have encountered by reading research and other professional publications, or through courses, workshops, and conferences. They could then compile a short annotated list of ideas that is then given to other teachers and the principal, either through an informal presentation or through a memo. At the end of the year, members of this committee could organize a discussion of the most exciting new ideas each teacher and the principal has identified during the year. This discussion could lead to further consideration of ideas in cooperation with the committee for new programs on curriculum changes. A shared bibliography of recommended current professional readings could also be generated by soliciting entries from the teaching staff and principal.

In total, a configuration of committees such as this has great potential for a continuing process of school review and improvement.

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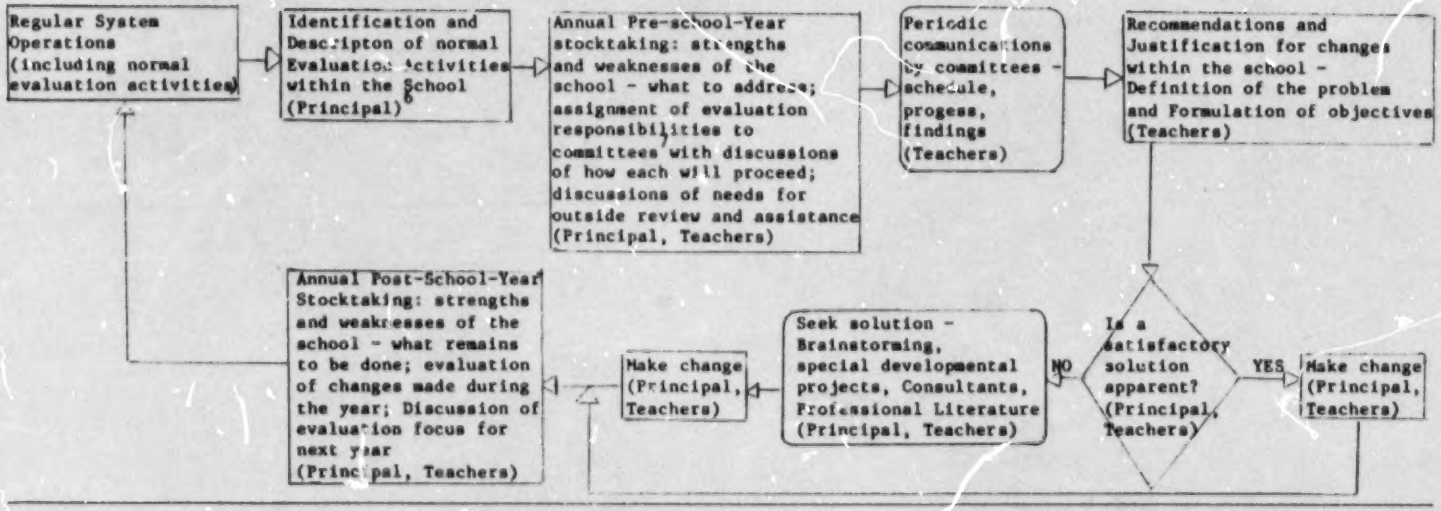
Figure 1
A Flowchart Depicting a System for School Evaluation[5]


Regular System Operations (including normal evaluation activities)
Identification and Description of normal Evaluation Activities within the School (Principal)[6]
Annual Pre-school-Year stocktaking: strengths and weaknesses of the school - what to address; assignment of evaluation responsibilities to committees[7] with discussions of how each will proceed; discussions of needs for outside review and assistance (Principal, Teachers)
Periodic communications by committees - schedule, progess, findings (Teachers)
Recommendations and Justification for changes within the school - Definition of the problem and Formulation of objectives (Teachers)
Is a satisfactory solution apparent? (Principal, Teachers)
NO
YES
Seek solution - Brainstorming, special developmental projects, Consultants, Professional Literature (Principal, Teachers)
Make change (Principal, Teachers)
Make change (Principal, Teachers)
Annual Post-School-Year Stocktaking: strengths and weaknesses of the school - what remains to be done; evaluation of changes made during the year; Discussion of evaluation focus for next year (Principal, Teachers)

[5] This flowchart is adapted from an earlier representation of the evaluation process that was developed by Stufflebeam (1982).

[6] In the school that was studied, these included: (1) problem solving in instruction and classroom management, (2) choosing curriculum and curriculum materials, (3) testing, (4) generating and discussing new ideas for the school (program, facilities, organization, personnel assignments, class size), (5) accumulating qualitative information about individual students, (6) choosing inservice experiences for teachers and developmental goals for the school, (7) trying out new instructional methods and materials, (8) changing curriculum content. This is not to say that these are the only evaluation activities found in schools. Indeed, each school should take stock of its own evaluation activity. Elsewhere (Sanders, 1978), it has been suggested that school evaluation could focus on student progress and needs, staff performance, resource apportionment, curriculum design and content, classroom processes, instructional materials, learning environment and facilities, staff development and needs, instructional decision making, community involvement, policies, and school organizational structure.

[7] The committees that could be established for the school that was studied would be given responsibility for the evaluation functions that were discussed earlier in this paper (i.e., one would be charged with establishing a mechanism for cooperative problem sharing and problem solving for common and unique classroom issues and for making the mechanism operational, another committee would be charged with establishing a system for curriculum and curriculum materials reviews and then undertaking a review of one subject area such as reading, etc.). An appendix is included on how the committees could function.

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